

A range extension for Várzea Thrush *Turdus sanchezorum* in south-west Amazonia

by Edson Guilherme

Received 19 November 2012

Várzea Thrush *Turdus sanchezorum* is a recently described cryptic species (O'Neill *et al.* 2011), the plumage of which is very similar to that of other species in the *T. hauxwelli* / *T. fumigatus* complex. This similarity resulted in the species remaining overlooked by field workers and museum-based ornithologists, who misidentified it for other *Turdus*. However, through the careful investigation of specimens, ornithologists recognised a distinct plumage in some individuals assigned to *T. hauxwelli*, in particular those collected in the Peruvian Amazon. These were identified as representing a 'grey-tailed morph' of *T. hauxwelli*, an illustration of which appears in Schulenberg *et al.* (2007). Subsequently, genetic and vocal studies confirmed that this form is a distinct species and the sister taxon of Unicoloured Thrush *Turdus haplochrous*, which is sympatric with *T. hauxwelli* in northern Bolivia (O'Neill *et al.* 2011).

O'Neill *et al.* (2011) reviewed material in several ornithological collections and mapped *T. sanchezorum* as having a relatively ample distribution in western Amazonia (Fig. 1), where it is associated primarily with *várzea* along the Solimões (Amazon) and its principal southern tributaries, including the Madeira and Purus, in Brazil, and the Ucayali, in Peru.

On 10 May 2010, a *T. sanchezorum* was captured in a mist-net in the Parque Zoobotânico of the Universidade Federal do Acre (PZ-UFAC; 09°57'S, 67°52'W; Fig. 1). The bird (Fig. 3) was fitted with a band inscribed with the code J33044. It weighed 68 g, had a wing length of 110 mm, inner rectrices 90 mm, tarsus 35 mm and total length 235 mm. It was subsequently released near the capture site. Comparison of photographs of this individual with the description of *T. sanchezorum* (O'Neill *et al.*, 2011) and a photograph of the species in the wild, kindly provided by G. H. Rosenberg, permitted confirmation of this taxon in the Brazilian state of Acre.

On 9 June 2007, a specimen of the genus *Turdus* (MPEG 63654; Fig. 2) was collected at the edge of a *várzea* forest on the left bank of the rio Acre, at Fazenda São Raimundo (09°57'S; 67°44'W), c.10 km east of Rio Branco, the capital of Acre. Initially identified as Hauxwell's Thrush *T. hauxwelli*,



Figure 1. The geographic distribution (grey lines and yellow spot) of Várzea Thrush *Turdus sanchezorum* as defined by O'Neill *et al.* (2011) and the new records from the Brazilian state of Acre. Star = Parque Zoobotânico, Rio Branco; triangle = Fazenda São Raimundo, on the left bank of the rio Acre.



Figure 2. Comparison of MPEG 63654 collected in *várzea* at Fazenda São Raimundo (below) and a specimen (MPEG 63600) of Hauxwell's Thrush *Turdus hauxwelli* (above) collected at the same locality. Note the darker coloration of the dorsal surface and the contrast between the rectrices and uppertail-coverts on MPEG 63654 (© Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, Belém)



Figure 3. Várzea Thrush *Turdus sanchezorum*, Parque Zoobotânico, Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil, May 2010 (Edson Guilherme)

following preparation and cataloguing, it was compared with the series of *T. hauxwelli* at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (MPEG) in Belém, which includes specimens from Acre and elsewhere in Amazonia. The 2007 specimen proved to be more robust, with a yellowish-green bill and darker plumage, olive-brown dorsally, with dark outer rectrices contrasting markedly with the uppertail-coverts (Fig. 2), unlike the reddish-chestnut *T. hauxwelli* specimens from the same region (Fig. 2). It was therefore identified as the 'grey-tailed morph' from Peru (Guilherme 2009).

Capture of *T. sanchezorum* at PZ-UFAC permitted the tentative re-allocation of the specimen from Fazenda São Raimundo (MPEG 63654) to the same species, which was not possible at the time of its deposition in the Goeldi collection (2008) due to the lack of other specimens of this taxon for comparison. Although the general coloration of MPEG 63654 is similar to that of Várzea Thrush (Fig. 2), its orbital ring is the same colour as the plumage and the iris is red, whereas specimens of *T. sanchezorum* have a yellow / orange orbital ring and brown iris (O'Neill *et al.* 2011; Fig. 3). Given these inconsistencies in bare-part coloration, identification of MPEG 63654 should be treated with caution.

Confirmation of the presence of *T. sanchezorum* in Rio Branco (PZ-UFAC) and its possible presence elsewhere in the vicinity of this city, extend the species' known range c.400 km south of the nearest locality, Igarapé Castanha, on the rio Purus in the Brazilian state of Amazonas (Fig. 1), as reported by O'Neill *et al.* (2011). Its occurrence in Acre is not unexpected, however, given that the rio Acre is a right-bank tributary of the Purus, which rises in Peru and flows through Acre on its way north to discharge into the Amazon.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Gary H. Rosenberg for sending me a photograph of *T. sanchezorum* taken in Peru. I also thank the Centro Nacional de Pesquisa e Conservação de Aves Silvestres (CEMAVE / ICMBIO) of the Brazilian government, for providing the bands used in project 1099. I also thank the Amazonian Ornithology class of 2010 and my undergraduate students for their assistance banding birds on the UFAC Campus and Parque Zoológico. The Brazilian National Research Council, CNPq, provided financial support via project no. 474592/2010-3 (2010-2012). I thank Kevin Zimmer and Dan Lane for refereeing the manuscript.

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A Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* in mainland western Mexico

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Received 1 December 2012

Two subspecies of Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* breed in North America: *O. o. oenanthe* in north-east Canada and Greenland, and *O. o. leucorhoa* on coasts of Alaska and far north-west Canada; both winter in sub-Saharan Africa, but follow different migration routes (Kren & Zoerb 1997). The species has the 'widest record of vagrancy of any passerine' (Collar 2005). Nevertheless, most records in North America away from the breeding grounds are from the Atlantic coast, with many fewer on the Pacific.

On 20 October 2012, at Ejido Ojo de Agua El Cazador, 70 km west of the city of Durango, western Mexico (23°53'54.00"N, 105°17'26.39"W), JN observed a unusual bird that flew off before it could be identified. However, his photographs (Fig. 1) confirmed the bird's identity as a Northern Wheatear in non-breeding plumage.